

#### 4. LANDSDOWNE TERRACE STREET TREES

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Corporate Plan Output :Street Tree Maintenance and Felling City Wide	

The purpose of this report is to obtain a Board decision in response to Landsdowne Terrace residents' requests for the removal and replacement of the street trees.

#### Background

Parts of Landsdowne Terrace were first planted with trees in 1968. Since then there appear to have been periodic plantings, and more recently of Sweetgums (Liquidambar). The age, species and size of the trees is therefore quite variable and the trees do not create a good, even, avenue effect.

Over a period of some years complaints have been received from some Landsdowne Terrace residents mainly about the prolific seeding habit of the Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) trees planted in places along the street, but also of the damage caused to footpaths and other structures by the trees' roots.

Given the right growing conditions, the seed, which is very fertile, can germinate to produce many seedlings which may present a maintenance problem to the enthusiastic home gardener.

To reduce the seeding problems, the trees have been judiciously pruned to thin out the density of the branches in the crowns but the complaints have persisted. Any hard pruning back of the crowns will spoil the appearance of the trees and lead to future health and decaying wood problems.

#### The Tree Situation

There are a total of fifty-two (52) street trees planted in the Landsdowne Terrace footpath berms along the length of the street between Centaurus Road and the Wedgewood Road intersection. Not all these trees are Manna Ash, the species and their numbers are as follows :

Manna Ash	39 trees
American Ash ( <i>Fraxinus Americana</i> )	1 tree
Sweet Gum ( <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i> )	12 trees

Of the Manna Ash trees, those causing the worst problems with respect to seeding, footpath and other structural damage are those which have been grafted onto English Ash root stocks at the base of the trunk. English Ash root stocks are commonly used in the propagation of Manna Ash for the reason that English Ash is a much more vigorous tree and this vigour is imparted into the slower growing Manna Ash scion creating a tree that grows faster and larger than a Manna Ash would normally do. The English Ash root stock, and therefore the whole root system, also grows disproportionately larger than the rest of the tree, being much more aggressive in its effect on nearby structures than that of a naturally grown Manna Ash. It is not certain how much larger the grafted trees may grow whereas the ungrafted trees, even in maturity, are unlikely to grow much over five (5) metres in height .

Twelve (12) of the Manna Ash trees have been positively identified as having the English Ash root stocks. These trees are the largest trees in the street and are concentrated in the northern end of Landsdowne Terrace. While accepting that the grafted trees are creating the worst problems, it is fair to say that they are also the best looking trees, making the greatest contribution to the landscape character of the street. The phenomenon of the split bark, which afflicts some of these trees, has no significant affect on their health, stability or overall appearance. The cause of the bark splitting is not known as no disease organisms appear to be present .

One of the ash trees has been identified as an American Ash, a medium sized tree which has not been grafted.

The other twenty-seven (27) ungrafted Manna Ash trees are typically much smaller, some showing signs of stress and poor vigour. Because of their smaller size and slower growth rates, the problems of seed deposits and root damage are consequently much less and are not considered by the writer to be a significant cause for concern in this respect. It would be better to remove the poorer specimens and plant replacements.

The twelve (12) Sweetgum/Liquidambar trees are fairly recent plantings and being young, relatively small trees, are not causing any problems.

### **Considerations**

The Council receives a great many similar complaints from residents requesting that trees in streets (and parks) be removed for one reason or another. The complaints are not limited to any particular tree species, all trees produce a litter of some description, all street trees are capable of causing some form of structural damage or nuisance of some sort. It has always been the Council's policy to take all reasonable steps to alleviate the problems being experienced by residents. However, the Council also has to take into account the landscape and general environmental values provided by street trees and its policy of maintaining the "Garden City" character of Christchurch. Requests to remove trees are therefore usually declined by officers unless the damage or nuisance being caused is deemed to be serious or the trees are found to be in an unhealthy or unsafe condition. The costs of removing and replacing street trees is another major consideration. In the case of the larger trees in Landsdowne Terrace the cost of removal would be approximately \$200 per tree, the cost of replacements around \$120 per tree.

All this has to be weighed against the seriousness of the problems being caused to the resident/s and the recognition that a nuisance that may be dealt with easily by a resident in good health, may present a major problem to someone who is elderly or genuinely infirm.

### **Options**

In view of the considerations stated in the report the following options are proposed:

- (i) Retain all Manna Ash trees.
- (ii) Remove four (4) grafted Manna Ash trees outside property numbers 9, 23 and 29 only at this stage and a new landscape plan prepared for the Avenue for the Boards approval.
- (iii) Remove all nine (9) grafted Manna Ash trees outside property number 32 Centaurus Road and Landsdowne Terrace numbers 1, 5, 9, 19, 23, 29 and 12 only, retaining the three (3) grafted trees outside the Council community centre.
- (iv) Remove all grafted and ungrafted Manna Ash trees in Landsdowne Terrace.

Where it may be decided to remove any trees, it is proposed that they be replaced with trees of a different species.

**Recommendation:** That option (ii) be adopted by the Board.